

## **COLD WAR EXPANSION AT THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE MUSEUM**

### **The Cold War and Beyond**

With a new 200,000 square-foot third building having opened in 2003, the United States Air Force Museum offers a more intimate exploration of the Cold War and its effect on the world. Named the Eugene W. Kettering Building in honor of the first head of the Air Force Museum Foundation Board of Trustees, the centerpiece and first phase of a multi-phase expansion offered new exhibit space to allow the Museum to present the story of the USAF and America's involvement in the Cold War to today's war on terrorism.

Existing exhibit galleries have been modified to permit the chronology to flow naturally from the triumph of human flight; from the heroic actions and sacrifices of WWI, WWII, Korea and Vietnam; through the development of strategic deterrence in the Cold War resulting in the superiority of the latest weapons systems in today's Air Force. Full size exhibit dioramas dramatize the stories of the men and women of the Air Force along with the aircraft, missiles and technology of the period. Thousands of artifacts and memorabilia exhibited for the first time validate the Cold War story.

The Museum's world-class collection of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles will be dramatically presented in the new Missile Gallery, a launch silo

environment and second expansion phase that will provide protection from both weather and environmental deterioration. The presentation of our race into space and beyond will be dramatically enhanced with the additional exhibit space available.

The new expansion offers appeal to both the civilian and military community. Indeed the Cold War Era is a journal of American life for five decades. It undeniably is everyone's story, and its history must be preserved, told and remembered.

The third building accommodates more than 35 historically significant aircraft from the museum collection and eventually will feature interpretive dioramas and thousands of artifacts.

Exhibits will include the start of the Cold War with the historic Berlin airlift, which effectively nullified the Soviet blockade; the strategic bombers, fighters, and interceptors used in the height of the War; to finally the public presentation of the most modern weapons systems in today's Air Force, such as the F-117 Stealth Fighter and the B-2 Stealth Bomber.

The Cold War issued a dramatic change in the way we live. Nuclear threats, bomb shelters, strategic weapons, and brinkmanship are all recollections of the millions of

Americans who lived through the event. In reality, the Cold War encompassed every aspect of our existence. It touched our daily lives and left an everlasting influence on the path of our future.

Included in the legacy of the Cold War are important technology advances in communications, transportation, education, and medicine. In fact, the entire American infrastructure of today was molded by the influences of the Cold War Era. Interstate highways evolved to aid in the evacuation of American population centers threatened by nuclear attack. A RAND Corporation study for the Air Force led to rapid development of computers and eventually the Internet. Micro technology evolved from weapons development into historical breakthroughs in medical research. Space Exploration was born in response to nuclear competition in space. The race for technological superiority significantly increased government funding and student loans for higher education.

These same technologies became available for direct application to the homes, workplaces and leisure activities of all Americans. Most household appliances now encompass the same microcircuit technology developed for military use. Communication technology developed in connection with military command and control needs led to our everyday use of microwave

transmissions, cellular telephones, digital TV and compact disks.

The Cold War era stirred the world's social conscience. New organizations and alliances provided forums for international debate and discussion on varied political, economic and social issues. New boundaries of diplomacy and world order emerged. Throughout the period, military strength remained the real deterrent to overzealous actions by the world's great powers.

What began as a blockade of Berlin in 1949 climaxed in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. But the influences of the Cold War Era live on in the continuing pace of technology, social awareness and economic growth of today and beyond. We need now to preserve this priceless heritage and tell the stories of sacrifice, courage and leadership of ordinary citizens, pioneers of technology, political leaders, heroes of both action and conscience and most assuredly, the United States Air Force.

The \$26 million Cold War Expansion is being funded by the Air Force Museum Foundation and built for the Air Force by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Air Force will provide the funds to design and install the exhibits as well as the operating costs for the new facility. Construction began in 2001 with the building opening in 2003, coinciding with the Centennial of Flight celebration.

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